

Hiding tobacco products at convenience stores reduces teens' risk of future tobacco use

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Keeping tobacco products out of view in convenience stores significantly reduces teenagers' susceptibility to future cigarette use compared to when tobacco advertising and products are visible, according to a new RAND Corporation study.

The study, conducted in a one-of-a-kind laboratory replica of a convenience store, is the first to use a realistic setting to examine whether limiting displays of cigarettes and other [tobacco](#) products in retail outlets can reduce the intention of young people to begin smoking.

Researchers found an 11 percent reduction in cigarette smoking susceptibility when the tobacco 'power wall' was hidden compared to when the display of tobacco products was visible behind the cashier. The findings are being published in the journal *Tobacco Control*.

"These findings suggest limiting the visibility of [tobacco displays](#) in retail stores may reduce the number of young people who try cigarettes," said William Shadel, associate director of RAND Population Health Program and senior behavioral scientist at RAND, a nonprofit research organization.

Power walls at point-of-sale retail locations display hundreds of tobacco products along with branded posters, product slogans and prices. Power walls are usually positioned behind the cashier. In the current study,

researchers created a power wall consistent with what would normally be found in a typical convenience store.

In recent years, the [tobacco industry](#) has shifted most of its advertising from places such as magazines and billboards to point-of-sale advertising in retail locations. Canada and several other countries have enacted laws requiring that the power walls be hidden from view and only customers of legal age may view [tobacco products](#).

For the RAND study, researchers had teens visit a replica of a convenience store to do shopping while the tobacco power wall was in one of three random locations: behind the cashier, on a sidewall away from the cashier or hidden behind a screen.

A total of 241 adolescents aged 11 and 17 participated in the study. The teens were told the study was looking at adolescent convenience store shopping habits. The teens were enrolled in the study regardless of past tobacco use.

After completing a pre-shopping questionnaire, the teens were randomized to one of the three experimental conditions and given \$10 to spend in the store any way they wanted. The [convenience store](#) is 1,500 square feet and is stocked with more than 650 products.

Teens filled out a post-shopping experience questionnaire to determine their attitude toward smoking and their susceptibility to future smoking. The susceptibility assessment included three questions: "Do you think you will try a cigarette anytime soon?" "Do you think you will smoke a cigarette anytime in the next year?" and "If one of your best friends offered you a cigarette, would you smoke it?"

Researchers found hiding the tobacco power wall significantly reduced teenagers' susceptibility to future cigarette smoking compared to leaving

the [tobacco advertising](#) visible. Moving the power wall to a less-obvious location did not have any effect.

Researchers say the results provide information that the federal Food and Drug Administration's Center for Tobacco Products could potentially use to make future regulatory decisions for point-of-sale tobacco advertising.

Provided by RAND Corporation

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